

Experience winter nature

It may still be cold outside, but wrap up warm and get involved.

What you need

- Warm clothes
- Leaves
- Bucket
- Vegetable seeds
- Garden, allotment or greenhouse
- Hollow logs, twigs, leaves
- Old bricks
- Pruning shears

How does it work?

Winter might seem like the best time to stay indoors with a hot chocolate, but there are loads of fun activities to do outside. Going on winter walks is great for your health, and nature can be easier to spot in empty parks and fields. Just like you, plants and animals need a little extra protection during the colder months to help prepare them for spring.

COLD SNAP

The coldest temperature ever recorded in the UK during winter is -27.2°C in the Scottish Highlands.



Go flower hunting Keep an eye out for snowdrops, cyclamen, primroses and daffodils this month. You can find snowdrops and daffodils in parks, woodlands and on hedgebanks. Look for primroses and cyclamen in shady wooded areas, hedgebanks and sprouting out beside footpaths.



Make leaf skeletons Collect a few leaves that have a strong veins, such as oak, sycamore and maple. Soak them in a bucket of water for two to three weeks. You may need to change the water when it gets a bit mucky. Remove the leaves, gently brush away any excess pulp and leave them to dry overnight.



Plant winter vegetables Sowing seeds doesn't have to stop in winter. Some hardy plants don't mind the cold. Plant garlic and shallots in light soils, and cucumber and tomato seeds on a windowsill or in a greenhouse. If you live in a mild part of the UK you can also try sowing broad beans, carrots and parsnips.

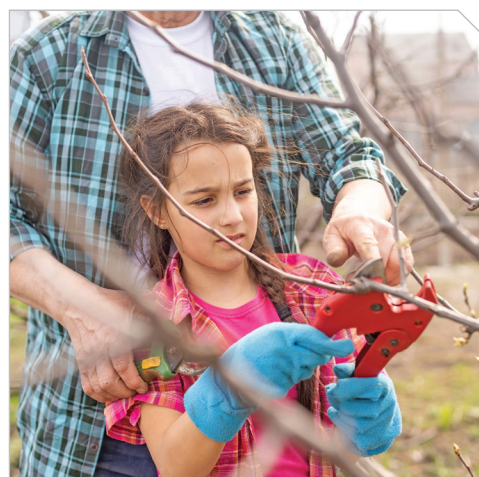


Things to make and do

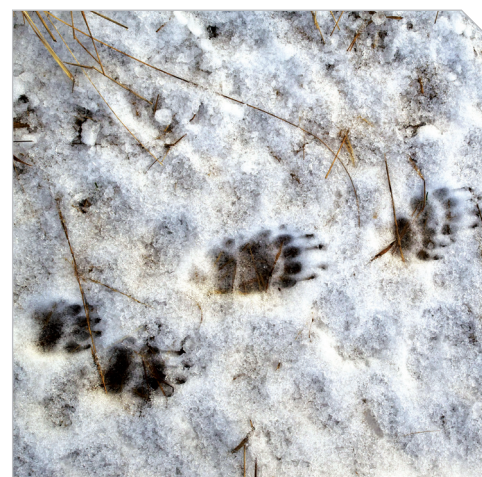
Enjoy some winter fun with your family.



Protect insects Some insects are out and about during winter, such as winter gnats, but if the weather gets warm enough you might see some queen bees and butterflies. Build a bug hotel out of hollow logs, twigs and leaves, and maybe a few old bricks. This makes a perfect place for insects to shelter.



Prune trees With fewer leaves on the branches, winter is the perfect time to prune trees and shrubs. This helps them grow back healthier and stronger in the spring. Cut just above the bud using pruning shears. Be sure to make angled cuts so that water will run off, preventing rotting.



Track winter animals Following the clues that animals leave behind is called tracking. Try your hand by searching for these clues: animal footprints in mud or snow; hair and fur caught on thorny plants or wire fences; plants that have been nibbled or chewed; and animal droppings.